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**27 September 1979**

# **Worldwide Report**

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY,  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**No. 92**



**FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE**

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27 September 1979

# WORLDWIDE REPORT

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

No. 92

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**DELHI JOURNALIST DEcriES THIRD WORLD'S DISADVANTAGES**

Delhi General Overseas Service in English 1010 GMT 23 Sep 79 BK

[Commentary by H.R. Luthra, writer and journalist]

[Excerpts] Developing countries like us are not so lucky. We have been allotted very few channels for our external services, our own home programs and many other communication needs. The fact of the matter is that what is called the radio spectrum is overcrowded and there is an imbalance in the number of frequencies allocated to various countries. Those who were first in the field got the best share. In this race the developing nations got left behind, partly because they were technically backward or (happened) then to be under the rule of big powers and were therefore not able to speak up for themselves.

It is for these reasons that we in India are looking forward to the World Administrative Radio Conference which begins in Geneva on Monday [24 September] and will go on for 10 weeks. There, our delegation will not only urge consideration of India's own needs, but also reflect the viewpoint of other developing countries generally.

This conference has been convened by the International Telecommunications Union--ITU, for short--which was founded in Paris as long ago as 1865 for the purpose of regulating international use of radio waves. It has been one of the UN specialized agencies since 1947 and has 145 countries including India, as its members. There will be about 1,600 delegates attending this conference, which is being held after a lapse of 20 years. What is now decided at Geneva will be of vital interest to all of us because whatever frequencies are not allocated will hold good for many, many years--'til the next conference meets.

Fortunately it is recognized and accepted very early by each country that parceling outer space is a matter for international cooperation. Radio waves know no national boundaries, and uncontrolled use of radio waves can only cause utter worldwide confusion. But there is only a limited part of the electromagnetic wave spectrum which can be used for radio, TV and other telecommunication purposes. Also, there must be a certain minimum gap between the one allotted frequency and the next one.

A country like India, with its vast geographical area and distances, huge population, low literacy and multiplicity of languages, has special needs for more channels. The negotiations at Geneva will be long and involved because there will be many claimants for frequencies. It is hoped the deliberations will lead to an equitable assignment of resources, and the gap between those who have and those who do not have will be markedly narrowed.

CSO: 5500



**COSTA RICA WANTS 'EQUITABLE ACCESS' TO FREQUENCIES**

**San Jose Radio Reloj in Spanish 1330 GMT 23 Sep 79 PA**

[Text] Assignment of frequencies, broadcasting over the citizens band and unrestricted transmission of radio and television programs via satellite are sources of concern for the Costa Rican Government. Accordingly the Costa Rican delegation to the World Administrative Radio Conference--to be held in Geneva beginning next week--will raise the subject of the political, juridical and social consequences of such measures.

Our government feels that the assignment of frequencies and the geostationary orbit must be guided by the principle of equitable access, and not that of "first come, first served" as is currently the case. The latter system favors the developed nations and harms underdeveloped countries. Therefore a change of policy in this field is an urgent necessity.

CSO: 5500

## WORLDWIDE AFFAIRS

### 'DDP' NEWS AGENCY PLANS CLOSER COOPERATION WITH 'TASS'

Frankfurt FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE in German 23 Aug 79 p 2 DW

[Report signed BB]

[Text] Frankfurt, 22 August--The Bonn news agency Deutscher Depeschen-Dienst GmbH (DDP) will further develop its cooperation with the Soviet Union; it has terminated its contract with the French news agency AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE effective the end of this year. "It has already been projected," writes the DDP report on the 1978 business year, "that other foreign agencies will be available under more favorable financial terms than the earlier ones." The DDP business report contains hardly a good word about its present partner. In 1978 it was even stated that "the quantity and quality of the service from our French partner was constantly deteriorating." The official Soviet news agency TASS, the news reports of which DDP publishes in the FRG on the basis of a contract it has with TASS, plans to extend the daily wordage of its German-language service from 7,000 to 9,000 words.

With the help of TASS, DDP plans to continue to develop its foreign service. The business report says that a year ago the TASS director general in Moscow gave DDP the opportunity to use the "international lines" of the Soviet news agency. "In exchange" TASS distributes its German-language service in the Federal Republic. The DDP foreign service consists mainly of English-language reports that are sent to the state-owned ZAMBIA NEWS AGENCY (ZANA) in the Zambian capital Lusaka. ZANA passes the news to the state-owned press agencies of such countries as Tanzania, Angola and Mozambique which call themselves "front-line states" as does Zambia; the news is not passed to the Western-oriented "frontline state" Botswana. The news reports--DDP distributes ZANA material totaling about 5,000 words daily in the Federal Republic--are sent via teletype lines.

The news agency information service "Text Intern" has found out that the cooperation treaty between TASS and DDP envisages that DDP will use the Soviet "Cosmos" satellite for sending news to Lusaka; the satellite is located over the Gulf of Bengal in a geostationary orbit. The TASS news service which DDP committed itself to distribute in the Federal Republic, according to "Text Intern" will "abstain from disseminating protocol and propaganda material." Instead it plans to carry "colorfully written" reports on life in all parts of the Soviet Union. Paid trial subscriptions to the DDP-TASS service have been ordered by the Hamburg magazines DER SPIEGEL and STERN as well as by Westdeutscher Rundfunk. The annual financial reports show that DDP income of DM163,332 in 1978 contained an almost 5 percent contribution from the Federal Press Office and the 1977 income of DM240,000 a contribution of more than 7.5 percent from that office.

CSO: 5500

BRIEFS

**TUNISIA ON WORLD RADIO CONFERENCE**—Tunis, 18 Sep (TAP)—Commenting this morning on the International Conference of Radio Directors which will open in Geneva within a few weeks under the sponsorship of the I.T.U., LA PRESSE writes notably: "At the Geneva meeting, the African, Asian and South American developing countries intend to claim a broader access to the radio frequencies. These frequencies being given for 20 years, the outcome of these Geneva proceedings will certainly be essential for the future. The problem lies in the extremely rapid development of the wireless communication means. The developing countries needs increased to such that the number of frequencies devolved to the Third World becomes insufficient and handicaps the expansion of their own means of communication. Thus today 10 percent of the countries of the world dispose of 90 percent of the frequencies and the Third World wants to put an end to this Western monopoly. It is a question of justice and balance in the international relations," concludes the paper. [Text] [Tunis TAP in English 1405 GMT 18 Sep 79 LD]

**NIGERIA TO RADIO CONFERENCE**—Nigeria is to be represented by a 25-man delegation at the World Administrative Radio Conference taking place in Geneva, Switzerland, later this month. Members of the team are drawn from the armed forces, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRON, the Nigerian Television Authority, the ministry of communications and other groups. The chairman of the National Frequency Board, Brig (A. O. Adilejo), advised the delegation to press hard on the frequency allocations for the nation's various services, especially in broadcasting and service allotment for specific requirements. He implored the team to reflect on the additional benefits which the nation could derive from the existing frequencies [sentence as heard]. [Text] [Lagos International Service in English 0530 GMT 16 Sep 79 LD]

**KENYA DELEGATION TO CONFERENCE**—The managing director of Kenya posts and telecommunications, Mr Ngony, leaves as the deputy leader of a government delegation to the World Administrative Council to be held in Geneva. The conference starts tomorrow. The conference, which will end on 30 November, has a heavy program schedule. The conference will discuss and decide on ordinary allocation of radio frequency spectrum [as heard]. It will also determine appropriate radio regulations to be honored internationally. This

is to insure that the radio frequencies allocated at the conference are used within and among the radio frequency regions of the world. Mr Nguny is accompanied by his deputy, Mr Philip (Okundi). An advance Kenyan delegation comprising several engineers is already in Geneva for the conference. [Text] [Nairobi Domestic Service in English 1400 GMT 19 Sep 79 LD/EA]

URUGUAY PURCHASES ITALIAN GROUP) \*TARION--President Aparicio Mendez today signed a decree which authorized the National Telecommunications Administration (ANTEL) to purchase a satellite ground station from Italy. This station will cost 16,097,000 new Uruguayan pesos. [Montevideo Radio El Espectador in Spanish 1500 GMT 3 Aug 79 PY]

'AGERPRES,' 'XINHUA' SIGN COOPERATION--Bucharest, AGERPRES, 18/8/1979-- The Romanian news agency AGERPRES and the Chinese news agency XINHUA concluded on Saturday, August 18, an agreement on collaboration and information exchanges. [Text] [Bucharest AGERPRES in English 1745 GMT 18 Aug 79 AU]

CSO: 500

# SATELLITE LINK WITH OUTBACK TESTED, RECOMMENDED

## Minister's Telephone Call

Melbourne THE AGE in English 10 Aug 79 p 6

[Article by Peter Roberts]

[Text]

**LONGREACH.** — "We could ring Jimmy Carter, or what about trying Malcolm in Africa?"

With these words yesterday the Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Mr. Staley, picked up a telephone and made the first call from outback Australia direct through satellite.

His calls to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Mr. Eric Hughes, and the Queensland Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, were beamed from Longreach by a Canadian satellite over the Pacific.

If Mr. Staley has his way, the Federal Government will decide within months to buy a domestic satellite system for the outback.

Telecom, which has been a reluctant supporter of the satellite idea, turned on the long-distance miracle of telephones that brought sun in the red and purple decorated lounge of the Jumbuck Motel.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen — suffering a several-second delay on the satellite link — cut Mr. Staley off at the end of their conversation.

"If you can initiate the service like this to the people of the island, Tony, you have really achieved something outstanding," he said.

"There are so many people out there who are waiting to see and hear things that the rest of Australia sees and hears."

Mr. Staley said he hoped to

make "submissions to Federal Cabinet within weeks on the satellite proposal."

The satellite system for television, telephone, data and defence, would cost about \$200 million.

Each user would have to buy a television receiver for about \$200 and a two-way telephone transceiver for \$12,000 as well as paying for a share of the satellite.

"I am not saying that the Government will decide anything right away," Mr. Staley said.

"We are saying that the concept of a satellite is generally sound for a country like Australia."

"It is up to the Government to decide if you believe in the need to overcome the tyranny of distance, whether there should be an element of community subsidy."

Mr. Staley's telephone calls yesterday went direct to the satellite from a small dish on the one-sided lawn of the Jumbuck Motel.

It was then relayed to Australia via Ottawa, Canada and Japan.

Telecom's assistant director of research, Mr. Eric Craig, said a satellite system would be cheap or only 1.7 the last few thousand telephone subscriptions, who by 1985 would not be reached by conventional means.

"It has not made an economic case for itself yet," Mr. Craig said.

Mr. Staley said no single media organisation would be allowed to monopolise outback television.

## Report Backs Satellite

Sydney THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD in English 16 Aug 79 p 1

[Article by Richard Macey]

[Text]

**CANBERRA.** — A new Federal Government report has recommended that Australia should set up a domestic communications satellite system.

The satellite would be mainly used for handling the increasing volume of communications between the major cities and would also provide telephone and television facilities for the outback.

A working group appointed by the Minister for Post and Telecommunications, Mr Staley, which produced the report presented its findings to the Government yesterday.

The report calls for a national communications satellite system to be set up under the control of a Government commission.

The group, which has representatives from the Departments of Post and Telecommunications, Health, Defence, Science, Transport, the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Finance, was set up by Mr Staley to review an earlier report which recommended a satellite system in July last year.

That report, produced by the Federal Government's national satellite task force, and headed by the then general manager of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission, Mr Harold White, called for the setting up of a satellite system "as early as practicable."

The task force predicted that a satellite system, operating by the mid-1980s, would cost about \$190 million.



## AUSTRALIA

### NEW COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY PLANNED FOR WATSONIA BASE

Brisbane THE COURIER-MAIL in English 8 Aug 79 p 9

[Text] Canberra.--The Federal Government will spend \$9,400,000 to upgrade its intelligence links with the United States.

The Defence Minister (Mr. Kilian) said yesterday a new satellite communications facility would be built at the defence complex at Watsonia, near Melbourne.

Mr. Kilian said the facility would use the United States Defence satellite communications system, but it would be operated and maintained entirely by the Australian Defence forces.

Defence experts said later the satellite would be used principally by a unit of the highly secret Defence Signals Directorate located at Watsonia to transmit and receive intelligence information from the United States.

The Defence experts said the directorate used

cable links and high frequency transmission.

They said the cable links were inefficient because only a certain amount of data could be transmitted at a given time.

They said high frequency transmission also was inadequate because although data was transmitted in code it could easily be intercepted.

A defence spokesman said public tenders for the contract for the facility's shell would be called soon for completion at the end of next year.

Details on the electronics equipment had not been finalized and it was not known when tenders would be called for that work.

## AUSTRALIA

### BRIEFS

**TELECOM SERVICE COSTS**--It will cost more to install a switchboard, but less for a direct interstate private line in price changes announced by Telecom yesterday. Telecom's customer service chief manager (Mr. Roger Banks) said businesses renting new multi-line telephones and switchboards would pay up to 15 per cent more. During the next year, 900,000 people were expected to seek new services. A capital programme involving \$1000 million was needed to provide these services, Mr. Banks said. [Excerpt] [Brisbane THE COURIER-MAIL in English 14 Aug 79 p 9]

**TELETEXT DEMONSTRATION**--The Postal and Telecommunications Department, together with the Canadian Department of Communications and Telecom Australia will demonstrate the Canadian Telidon Videotex system (also called Teletext) in the ANP Theatre on Thursday at 9.30 am and 2 pm. The department believes these demonstrations will be of great interest to potential users of Teletext because it is examining the appropriate standards for broadcast Teletext. The Telidon system transfers visual images and textual information by using picture description instructions and other data. The resolution of the stored images is said to be virtually independent of terminal configurations, communications networks and the construction of the data base. The manufacturers anticipate that within a year, several thousand terminals, connected through the telephone system, will be undergoing user trials. [Excerpts] [Melbourne THE AGE in English 14 Aug 79 p 26]

CSO: 5500

## MALAYSIA

### BRIEFS

**TELEVISION TRANSMITTING STATION**--A television transmitting station will be built at Sungai Lembing, 32 miles from Kuantan, to improve TV reception in the region. Deputy Information Minister Dr Ling Liong Sik said 519,000 ringgit has been approved for the project under the midterm review of the third Malaysia plan. [Kuala Lumpur Domestic Service in English 1130 GMT 8 Aug 79 BK]

CSO: 5500

## MONGOLIA

### BRIEFS

ERDENET COMMUNICATIONS CENTER--Ulaanbaatar, 11 Aug--A new communications complex equipped with the latest technical devices has begun operations in Erdenet. The center was built by Mongolian and Soviet builders. Addressing a commissioning ceremony, C. Suren, deputy chairman of the MPR Council of Ministers, stressed that the new complex will be of great significance for strengthening the material and technical base of communications in the MPR. [Ulaanbaatar MONTSAME in Russian 1820 GMT 11 Aug 79 ON]

CSO: 5500

**'NATION REVIEW' CONDEMNS PLAN TO CENSOR SATELLITE NEWS**

Bangkok NATION REVIEW in English 25 Aug 79 p 2 BK

[Editorial: "Satellite News Censorship Gives Govt a Bad Name"]

[Text] Censorship of any kind is anathema to the communications media and we see absolutely no reason for the government imposing censorship on 'satellite news' which we have been watching for quite a long time. First it is the principle that hurts and second there seems to be no point in it except for the ill-will which the government will obtain abroad for introducing censorship to foreign news in Thailand's most important communications medium, namely television.

This is not a question of self-censorship but a direct government censorship. All newspapers, for instance, impose a certain amount of self-censorship in that they suppress stories which may be of a libellous nature or other stories that might not have been properly sourced and which could not be confirmed. But it is completely different when a censorship committee, including representatives from the Supreme Command and special branch police, sits down and checks the news.

Television and newspapers are completely different kinds of media. While the newspapers may run columns or in-depth political analysis, the television is entirely visual and the camera focuses on where the action is, and whenever there are riots or guerrilla war or a hijack drama, it makes for visual news while the newspaper may be interested in the background of what is happening.

Recently satellite news on TV has been quite heavy in its coverage of events in Nicaragua and Iran because civil war and rioting are extremely visual news. Now the government is going to suppress news reports adverse to government policy or setting a bad example to people or those detrimental to national security or the good moral principles of the public. We do not know whether the events in Nicaragua and Iran fall in this category.

Occasionally, there are reports about Thailand and usually they are about the events in Prachinburi Province near the Cambodian border. Some of these reports on the refugees may reflect adversely on Thailand and even suppressing them here is of no use. These bits of TV news are being shown around the world and that is what should worry the government so much that Thailand should mount effective counter-offensive to such TV news. It does not harm at all if Thais watch it.

What we seriously object to is catch-all phrases as "detrimental to national security" under which any news can be cut because there are no clear definitions or guidelines as to what hurts national security. For all we know the coverage of the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe Rhodesia could endanger national security because, after all, we have communist insurgency here. Of course we entirely agree that if the satellite news covers "Miss Nude contest," it should be cut but that should be left to the news editors of the TV nations who certainly will not run it anyway.

## BRIEFS

LAG IN COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY--The further expansion and utilization of the favorable conditions arising from our joining the international socialist cooperation requires that we raise the standard of our production-technological base. This means we must introduce the production of advanced new electrotechnical components for computer technology--such as large-scale integrated circuits [obvody vyssi integrace]--new memory elements and microprocessors, new technologies insuring a high degree of reliability, quality, production efficiency, and so forth. Our lag in this sphere unfavorably influences the progress of the production of the new EC-1025 computer and also puts the future transition to the production of other new equipment in jeopardy. [Eng Josef Vraný, director of the Research Institute for Electronic Computing Appliances] [Excerpt] [Prague RUDE PRAVO in Czech 21 Aug 79 p 3 AU]

CSO: 5500



## HUNGARY

### BRIEFS

**NEW TELEVISION TRANSMITTER**--The new television transmitter in Budapest, carrying the television second program, will start test operations this evening. The 40 kilowatt transmitter, constructed at a cost of 20 million forints, will enable viewers in the capital and surrounding area to receive the second program. [Budapest Domestic Service in Hungarian 1730 GMT 23 Aug 79 LD]

CSO: 5500

**ARGENTINA**

**BRIEFS**

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEM--(Silvio Carlos Sorio), administrator general of the National Post Office and Telegraph Enterprise (ENCOTELO), inaugurated an electronic communications system which will operate between the metropolitan city of Buenos Aires and the province of Cordoba. [Buenos Aires Domestic Service in Spanish 1030 GMT 2 Aug 79 PY]**

**CSO: 3500**

## COSTA RICA

### FOREIGN, DOMESTIC SECTORS CONCERNED ABOUT NEW RADIO STATION

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 10 Aug 79 7 4-A PA

[Article by Bosco Valverde]

[Excerpts] The operation in this country of a powerful shortwave radio station called Radio Noticias del Continente, which broadcasts at 9615 kHz and 9490 kHz on the 31 meter band, with 50 kw of power and rhombic directional antennas that can span the world, has caused concern among both domestic and foreign sectors. The station's studios are located in San Jose, about 300 meters south of Chico Soto on the Colon Promenade, and its broadcasting facilities are located in a peaceful little section of Grecia called Puente de Piedra.

Until the station was established, the humble townspeople, mostly farmers, were able to fully enjoy their television programs. However, difficulties began when the station began operating, and Luis Carlos Bolanos Quesada, a resident of Grecia, has reported that the inhabitants are even considering establishing a committee to file a protest with the proper authorities.

However, the emergence of ideological differences is more likely. The station's antennas are directed toward North and South America, but the broadcasts place primary emphasis on the Southern Cone. Although the Argentine Embassy in Costa Rica has denied it, the truth is that there is concern among some South American governments because of the type of news and commentaries on their countries that are being broadcast by the new station.

Miss Ana Lorena Cortin Leiva [director of the station], has reiterated that the station is completely commercial in nature. She said that regular programming began on 7 August, which is why there have been no commercial announcements so far. However, she added that "the primary objective is to include advertising from international organizations and enterprises."

CSO: 5500

## REPORT ON TELEVISION PREPARATIONS FOR NONALIGNED SUMMIT

Havana Domestic Television Service in Spanish 0000 GMT 28 Aug 79 FL

[Text] The sixth nonaligned summit which will be held in Havana soon is of interest to all. And, so as to convey information on it to our people and the whole world, Cuban television has made a number of great investments including doubling the capacity of the color television master control which now has 26 receivers and 35 signal transmitters. All of this work is being carried out by the same personnel who work at the installations, thus representing a great deal of effort.

Along with this new reception and signal transmission capacity is the work on the long distance command links in color television movies which can now be commanded from the Cuban television studios by this remote control installation. The technicians and workers of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television--ICRT--pushed themselves to complete the installation within the required time. There has also been a review of and reinstallation of equipment used to convert television signals which are emitted in our country to the line norms of the [television] systems which are used in other nations and, at the same time, to adapt signals from those systems to the one we use in Cuba. Another important installation set up by Cuban television for the sixth summit is the international transmissions room, and the setting up of a studio with 16 booths from which narrations can be made for international transmissions. Basically these transmissions will be made for either a single country or for several countries at a time as in the case of the Eurovision Intervention and Television Pool--representing the news stations of the nonaligned countries--systems.

Another investment made by Cuban television to expand its capabilities has been the acquisition of new portable television equipment which can be used for both direct transmissions and for videotape recordings. At the same time three new videotape rooms have been installed which bring to nine the number of rooms available for taping and editing while using this modern technique. In addition, adaptations have been made to equipment so that tapes can be sent via the (PAL) system, the system used by some nonaligned countries.

CSO: 5500

### THREE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION CENTERS INAUGURATED

#### Centers for Nonaligned Summit Use

Havana Domestic Service in Spanish 1000 GMT 10 Aug 79 FL

[Text] Commanders of the revolution Ramiro Valdes and Guillermo Garcia, and Pedro Miret--all members of the PCC Politburo--attended the inauguration of three international communication centers which will be used by our country at the sixth nonaligned summit. The equipment installed at Aguila and Dragones are: the international long distance telephone center, the international telegraph terminal and the Communications Ministry automatic telephone switching center. A tour was made at the inauguration in which Pedro Guelmes, member of the PCC Central Committee and minister of communications, explained the peculiarities of each center.

At the long distance telephone center an installation was built wherein its 48 positions can establish communication with close to 200 [figure as heard] countries of the world. The telegraph terminal is a unit designed to provide public and private correspondence services in our country. The automatic switching telephone center has a 120-circuit capacity of which 50 service some countries. When the sixth [nonaligned] summit is over these centers will continue providing service to the public.

#### Garcia Frias Tours Site

Havana Domestic Service in Spanish 2130 GMT 13 Aug 79 FL

[Text] Guillermo Garcia Frias and Pedro Miret, members of the PCC Politburo, have visited the "Caribe" land station to see the state of preparations at that installation which will be responsible for the main transmissions of the sixth [nonaligned] summit. Others attending were Flavio Bravo, vice president of the Council of Ministers, Pedro Guelmes, minister of communications, and Oscar Fernandez Noll, president of the People's Government Havana City Province Assembly.

At the "Caribe" land station located in Jaramo, Havana Province, the visitors were received by Felix Santiago, director of the National Communications Enterprise, and Guillermo Cabrera, director of the aforementioned station. The leaders noted that the preparatory work was satisfactory and they praised the characteristics of the new station which has been set up and which will transmit color and black-and-white television to more than 30 countries as part of the system linking Cuba to the rest of the world during the sixth [nonaligned] summit.

CSO: 5500

## PTT MINISTER'S INTERVIEW ON PHONE SYSTEM

Beirut MONDAY MORNING in English 3-9 Sep 79 pp 22-27

[Interview with Michel el-Murr, minister of post, telegraphs and telephones, by Mona es-Said, date and place not given]

[Text]

The minister of Post, Telegraphs and Telephones, Michel el-Murr, is standing by the promise he made around a month ago.

He is at least standing fairly close to it.

The promise he made a month ago was that within 45 days, 80 percent of Lebanon's telephone problems will have been solved.

When I talked to him last week, he said:

"The 45 days end on September 15. Eighty percent of the problems could be solved by then. Of course, they could be solved by September 20, or 25, or 30. What's 10 to 15 days between friends?"

The possible 10 to 15-day delay, Minister Murr told me, has been imposed on the ministry of PTT by the recent unpleasant doings in downtown Beirut when the Lebanese Army traded harsh words and various types of shells with the militias of the Lebanese Front over the proposed Army deployment around the Beirut Port, prompting the Arab Deterrent Forces to get into the act.

With the commercial center of the capital turned into a deathtrap for a brief period, the PTT repairmen and technicians

showed signs of extreme reluctance to show up at the Riad Solh PTT headquarters. Hence the possible - perhaps probable, possibly inevitable - delay in the honoring of the "80 percent" promise.

What, I asked him, does the 80 percent cover, and who are the unfortunates who will be included in the remaining 20 percent?

The minister gave me the following information about the current problems, how much of each he has solved so far, which part of which problem he won't be able to solve in the near future, and how long it will take him to up the 80-percent improvement to a full 100 percent:

**PROBLEM ONE: INTERNAL CALLS**

Minister Murr said that when he took over in July, he discovered that telephone connections between Beirut and other Lebanese towns and cities were "90 percent inoperative" and that telephone connections between the various exchanges within the capital were in a deplorable state.

"Where inter-city lines are concerned," he said, "90 percent of the problem has been solved.



"Let me put it this way:

"If there were 3,000 lines connecting Beirut with the rest of Lebanon, around 2,800 of them were not working when I took over. Of these, we have so far repaired 2,500. There are around 500 left to repair, and we're working on them.

"But you can say that inter-city calls are now back to normal.

"For over a year, you couldn't call Alay or Souk el-Gharb from Beirut, for instance. Now you can.

"To call Tripoli from Beirut, you had to dial 20 times to connect twice. Now, it's been reversed. You connect 18 times out of 20."

The same goes for calls within Beirut. Ashrafiyeh-Hamra calls, for instance, are not virtually impossible anymore, the minister said, and Hamra-Dora calls no longer drive those who attempt them to despair.

#### **PROBLEM TWO: INOPERATIVE LINES**

Of Beirut's 150,000 telephone lines, 22,000 were out of order when Murr was appointed. Of these, around 17,000 lines can be repaired — and will have been repaired by September 15 (or September 20, or 25, or 30).

The rest will have to wait, mainly because the repair crews can't get to them.

For instance:

The area which stretches from Nasra to the Damascus road and down to Bourj in the commercial center is inaccessible. In that area, there are 1,500 lines out of order.

Over 2,000 lines are out of order in the Saifi area. To repair them, the crews have to fix a cable near the downtown Opera Theater, and no crew is willing to venture into that area.

The "old Sidon road" (Mar Mikhael-Tayyounch) in the southeastern suburb of the capital has around 1,000 lines out of commission. Had that road been cleared

and opened to traffic last week, as planned, repair work could have started. But the road, due to last-minute hitches about which officialdom has remained mysteriously silent, has remained closed to anyone interested in survival, and the lines will therefore have to remain un-repaired.

Another problem which makes a 100 percent solution impossible by the end of September is war damage.

The major example of this can be found in the Furn esh-Shebbak telephone exchange, in which major instruments have been totally destroyed by shelling and have to be replaced before the exchange can work at full capacity.

Minister Murr estimates that there are around 2,000 seriously damaged lines in the Furn esh-Shebbak exchange, all accessible but none repairable without new equipment — "and it will take more than 45 days to get that equipment."

#### **PROBLEM THREE: DIAL TONE**

A common problem: having to wait interminable periods to get a dial tone, and often not getting it at all.

"There are many reasons for this," the minister told me, "and we are in the process of eliminating most of them."

Repair crews are hard at work in all Beirut and other Lebanese exchanges.

"I'm a minister for all of Lebanon, and I don't give priority to any area," Murr said. "The repair crews are working on all exchanges simultaneously. Go to the Hamra exchange, for instance, and you will find the men with their sleeves rolled up working on the 15,000 lines there. Go to the Riad Solh exchange, with its 48,000 lines, and you will find four repair crews, each working on 12,000 lines. Dora's 10,000 lines are also being worked on. The same goes for Furn esh-Shebbak. And I'm not talking about Beirut alone. Repair work is under way in exchanges all over the country — Zahleh, Sidon, Tripoli..."

When these teams finish their work - by the end of September at the latest ("security conditions permitting," the minister qualified prudently) - the dial tone situation will have improved "by 80 percent."

"For instance, take the Hamra exchange - the numbers that start with 34, which everybody is complaining about. Now, you may have to wait half an hour to get the dial tone. The same is true of the Dora exchange. When we're through, you will only have to wait one minute to get the dial tone. One minute is still too long to wait, I agree, but it's better than half an hour."

One problem with exchanges like the Hamra exchange is the tremendous amount of pressure on the lines.

The Hamra area has become a predominantly commercial area, and the 15,000 lines of the Hamra exchange are taking a terrible beating from the banks and other commercial establishments which keep them busy non-stop most of the day.

This is why the repairs that are being made now will not totally solve the Hamra problem. To solve it, more lines will have to be added to relieve the pressure.

As a make-shift arrangement, the minister has ordered the transfer of 1,000 lines from the Hamra exchange to the nearby Ras Beirut exchange.

"The transfer will be completed by October 10," Murr said, "and that should help relieve some of the pressure on Hamra. In the other exchanges, there should be no problem. The Ras Beirut exchange is all right. The Ashrafiyeh exchange should be working very well within 10 days."

As for when Hamra will get the extra lines it needs, "that is a question that does not enter into the short-term repair program. It will be handled in the longer-term development plan, which we expect to get under way soon."

About that plan, more anon.

#### **PROBLEM FOUR: NEW LINES**

Minister Murr says that an average of 2,000 new lines have been added to the Lebanese telephone system annually over the past five years, and Lebanon now has a total of around 25,000 lines.

"In other words, over the past five years, they have been adding less than 200 new lines per month," he said. "What we are going to do is start adding 2,000 lines per month. We will be introducing as many new lines per month as they used to introduce in an entire year."

I found this hard to swallow and asked him if he thinks it can be done.

"Yes it can, and it is being done right now," he said. "The boys have become more energetic, the weather is great and all is well. The new lines are being connected at the rate of 2,000 per month."

Minister Murr's aim is to more than double the number of Lebanon's telephone lines - adding 300,000 lines.

That, however, can only be done in the framework of the major development project referred to above - a project which the minister explained to me as follows:

The telephone equipment Lebanon has now is about a quarter of a century old. New equipment is needed, and it will be brought in.

All of Lebanon will be equipped with new electronic telephone exchanges. The plans are being worked on now, and should be ready within a month. After the orders are made, it will take the manufacturers a minimum of 10 months to make the deliveries, and it will therefore take a minimum of 12 months from the time the orders are made until the new exchanges begin to operate in Lebanon.

"There will be new electronic exchanges everywhere. In Hamra, the new exchange will add another 15,000 lines to the 15,000 lines now available, and that will be Hamra's root solution. Then, you won't have to wait a minute for the dial

tone: you'll get it as soon as you lift the receiver.

"There will be a new exchange in Dora, in Sidon, in Zahle, in Tripoli, in Jounieh...

"That is when we will be able to say we have achieved a 100 percent solution of our telephone problems.

"The new lines will be added. I'm not saying we will add the 300,000 lines we're after overnight. It will be gradual. We'll start with 20,000 lines, and add 20,000 to 30,000 every two months. In other words, we will have our 300,000 electronic telephone lines within about two years after the new system is installed."

In the meantime, Murr intends to keep up the 2,000-new-lines-per-month pace, but he appeals to telephone applicants not to be impatient.

"The other day, I got a call about the Shouf district," he said. "They told me that there are some people there who have applied for telephone lines, put up the downpayment and have been waiting for over six years in vain. I gave the man - a reporter - my answer. It wasn't what you might call good press, but it was realistic. I said those people who have waited for six years - can't they give me six months? I have 500 workers, and I can't turn them into 5,000 workers. Those 500 workers cannot be expected to clear up a six-year mess in six days or six weeks. Where new lines are concerned, I have had to go by a priority system. We have started with Beirut and its suburbs, and then the other cities - Tripoli, Sidon, Zahle. It can't all be done instantly.

"People seem to think I'm a miracle worker. They lift their receiver, don't get the dial tone immediately, and they say, 'Minister Murr is here, so why don't I have a dial tone?' Suddenly, people who have been waiting for years can't wait for weeks. Everybody wants his problem solved in a couple of days. Well, it can't be done. Problems have been piling up since the beginning of the war - 1975. You can't solve a five-year accumulation

of problems in two or three weeks. I'm not asking for one or two years. I said 45 days for the solution of 80 percent of the problems. All right, so the 45 days may become 60 days, but is that such a long time? Everything is going ahead according to a schedule, and I earnestly hope that the security situation will remain reasonable, to allow us to continue at this pace."

#### **PROBLEM FIVE: THE HUMAN ELEMENT**

This has been the subject of widespread complaints among most telephone subscribers in Lebanon, who have been talking incessantly about such matters as (1) the impossibility of getting anyone to repair their telephones or even to find out if they can be repaired, (2) the impossibility of checking on delayed overseas calls, (3) the fact that the telephone information service does not work anymore, and, perhaps most important, (4) the bribes the telephone workers expect to get from the subscribers for any service they provide.

Minister Murr told me all these problems have been either completely or "almost completely" solved:

##### **1. Telephone repairs:**

Anyone whose telephone goes out of order now is urged to call the repair department at 387600 or 367600 between 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. ("The numbers," the minister said wryly, "are working.")

Give the man on duty your telephone number and tell him what the problem is. He will tell you how long it will take to fix it. Usually, it shouldn't take more than 48 hours.

If your line has not been repaired within the set period, you are urged to call a new complaints department attached to Minister Murr's office - numbers 387580 and 367580. Tell the man on duty what you were promised and leave it to him. He will follow up the matter and, if negligence is found to be involved, will punish the man responsible.

"Over the past month," Murr said, "we have received 450 complaints about the failure of technicians to repair lines within the 48-hour deadline they gave. All these complaints have been investigated, and in 52 cases, negligence was found to be the cause. Fifty-two employees have been punished. Of course, in the other cases, the problem was technical. The men had found that, contrary to their estimates, it would take them more than 48 hours to fix the line involved. You can't blame them for that. But the point is that there is action now, and there is follow-up. Subscribers are urged to take advantage of the new system and report any new breakdowns to the numbers I have given you."

**2. Information and overseas calls:** Information (no. 11) operators, and the operators who are supposed to follow up on delayed overseas calls (no. 102) had simply put down their earphones and stopped working.

Minister Murr has solved that problem and reports that subscribers can now call information and follow up on their long-distance calls as usual.

The problem, the minister explained, was that the operators had a perfectly justified demand which had not been met. The demand was for compensation provided for by existing regulations - for the hardship of having the earphone helmets on eight hours a day. They were entitled to it, and they weren't getting it.

"I gave it to them, and they're back at work," he said.

I pointed out to him that, follow-up or no follow-up, people were still complaining about the long delays in getting overseas calls through the long-distance operators.

He said the delays were another story. "It's a question of traffic. For instance, we have only six lines to Saudi Arabia, and there are around 1,000 people who want to get through to Saudi Arabia every day. If

each call takes three minutes only, the traffic is too heavy. So there are delays. You have the same situation with France. It depends on the demand. Try to call Austria, for instance, and you'll get your call through in 15 minutes."

### **3. Corruption:**

On this subject, Minister Murr made a shock announcement about what he called "a unique measure to be announced next week."

The unique measure, in a nutshell, consists in punishing both the bribed employee and the telephone subscriber who bribed him.

The double punishment will be possible in the case of long-distance calls, where the ministry can tell exactly how long the subscriber talks and how much the employee charges him.

"There's a lot of this sort of thing going on," he said. "Usually, respectable business firms are involved. They come to some kind of arrangement with the employee. They talk for half an hour, say, and the employee puts down three minutes.

"Well, this is theft of public funds, and the individual or institution who steals from the State must be punished. We have now organized ourselves to be able to tell exactly how long each long-distance call lasts, and we will follow up on what the employee registers.

"Where we find irregularities, we will, of course, punish the employee, but we will also punish the person or organization that bribed him. We will discontinue telephone services to that organization, and if it has a telex, we will cut that off too. We will also take the organization or the individual to court.

"I will announce this measure next week, and I intend to apply it. We'll see how much theft goes on after we refer two or three organizations to the judicial authorities."



Long-distance calls are one area where corruption can be easily detected. There are other telephone services, however, where the authorities find it more difficult to track down the culprits.

"We need evidence," Murr said. "I have repeatedly called on the public to let me know of any case where an employee has asked for money or accepted it in return for any service — repair, new telephone line, whatever. I have gone so far as to ask over 500 people who have received new telephone lines if they had to bribe anyone to get them. The answer was consistent: no. And my appeals have gone unanswered.

"At any rate, we have tightened up the entire operation at the telephone department, and although I'm not saying corruption has been eradicated, I would say that 90 percent of this problem has been solved — not by legal means so far, but by psychological and administrative pressure."

#### **PROBLEM SIX: TELEPHONE BILLS**

Telephone subscribers in Lebanon have more than their telephones to worry about; they have to be on their toes to find out when their telephone bills are due, how much they are and where they should be paid.

The entire bill-collection system is a mess; no bills are sent, no collectors come calling, and one has to be careful not to miss the radio announcement telephone payments if he doesn't want to pay a fine for delay or wake up one morning to find his telephone disconnected as a punitive measure.

Minister Murr says he's working on this problem now, using computers. The new billing system will be ready by the end of September, to be announced at the beginning of October and launched that same month. Until then, wait for the announcement.

Minister Murr, incidentally, has gone on record as saying that he will not ask anyone to pay his phone bill as long as

the necessary telephone repairs are not completed.

He qualified that statement to me as follows: "I did not mean that a subscriber will have the right not to pay a bill by simply saying his phone isn't working properly. I — and not the subscriber — will decide when the phones are working well enough to justify bill payment, and the phones, I can tell you right now, will be working well enough by the end of September."

The PFI minister also gave me the following miscellaneous information about his ministry and its plans:

- Lebanon should have a car phone system within six or seven months. Car phones "are available in countries less developed than ours is, and they are long overdue here." Is this the proper time to start such a luxury, considering what's going on? "Of course it is. This is a money-making proposition, like the entire telephone system is supposed to be. My business is to make the telephone system function well and bring money into the treasury. I will not say I'm too busy with the situation in the South or the security problems of Beirut. My business is this ministry, and I intend to make it work."

- The postal and cable systems are in a shambles, the cause being partly human and partly technical. The machinery in the Ba Hassan mail sorting center has all been either destroyed or stolen, and sorting is being done manually. In addition, some post offices are remaining closed or opening late and closing early. The minister has given orders to get those offices working as usual as of September 1, and has threatened punitive measures if his orders are not carried out. "In principle, things should improve in September, and should be distributed a little more efficiently. But as for when things will return to normal — that won't be before New Year's."

Murr, parenthetically, is also minister of housing and cooperatives, but he

confesses he has paid very little attention to that ministry.

"I believe that every minister should have one portfolio, no more," he said. "You ask me why my predecessor did not do what I'm doing in the telephone department now? My answer is that, besides the fact that the security situation in his days was bad, he had three portfolios to handle. That is too much for any man."

CSO: 5500



## INTER-AFRICAN AFFAIRS

### BRIEFS

ZAIRE, CONGO TELECOMMUNICATIONS LINK--Kinshasa, 8 Sep--Zaire and the Congo have entrusted to the French company SAT (Societe Anonyme de Telecommunications) the realization of a microwave link of 120 telephone lines and 24 telex lines between Kinshasa and Brazzaville. These lines should be operational by the end of 1979. This was announced by the weekly magazine MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS. [Excerpt] [Kinshasa AZAP in French 0730 GMT 7 Sep 79 AB]

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## VENDA PLANS EXTERNAL BROADCASTING SERVICE

Johannesburg THE CITIZEN in English 8 Sep 79 p 9

[Text]

**THABAYANDOU.** — The Venda Government intended extending its radio service to Africa and the rest of the world as soon as funds became available, the Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, Mr F N Ruvale, said in Thabayandou yesterday.

He added that an external broadcasting service would play an important role in Venda's endeavours to gain international recognition.

Mr Ruvale was speaking at the opening of the R200 000 radio Thabayandou studios. The new radio service, which has a trumpeting elephant as its call sign, started broadcasting a domestic service at the beginning of the month.

Stressing the educational value of a radio service, he said building projects totalling more than R13-million had been completed simultaneously with the broadcasting complex in preparation for independence next Thursday.

These included a new government complex at a cost of about R5.4-million, a national force base for more than R1.5-million, a central prison

for almost R1.5-million and a presidential residence at a cost of R277 000.

Venda's new broadcasting service should be used to foster good relations between Venda and other nations, the director of the SABC's external, Ngweni and Sotho services, Mr T van Heerden, told those present at the ceremony.

The service should bear a message of peace in the same way that the voices of the SABC's services for Black listeners were not used for warfare on the air.

Simply to have a radio voice did not necessarily help a nation much. The voice might be used to "scream without meaning", as many radio voices in the world were doing at present.

Mr van Heerden said there were such voices throughout the world, including Africa, "inflaming people to hatred and encouraging revolution."

Radio Thabayandou, however, should be used to broadcast the truth and to spread the message of peace.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

### **BRIEFS**

**PRIVATE TV RELAY STATIONS**--Hundreds of TV sets in Free State rural areas have been blacked at by the SABC's decision to shut 26 private relay stations. Eight stations in the Harriemith area have been sealed, and relay stations at Paul Roux, Rouxville, Afrikaskop and Bethlehem are to go the same way. An SABC spokesman said warnings were issued at the beginning of last year that relay stations had to comply with SABC specifications. The decision to close private relay stations in the Free State could possibly be due to the fact that the necessary alterations had not been made, he said. SABC-TV towers in Bethlehem, Alival North (Cape Province), Christians and Schweizer-Reneke (Transvaal) are scheduled for completion this year. [Text] [Johannesburg THE CITIZEN in English 12 Sep 79 p 11]

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